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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABU DHABI 004953

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STATE FOR S, U/S BURNS, IO A/S SILVERBERG, USUN AMB BOLTON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/06/2010

TAGS: [PREL](#) [UN](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR TAHIR-KHELI MEETINGS ON UN REFORM IN UAE

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Senior Advisor to the Secretary on UN Reform Ambassador Tahir-Kheli visited the UAE December 4-5 for separate meetings on proposed UN reforms with Information Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, and with MFA U/S Abdullah Rashid Al Noaimi and MFA International Organizations Director Yacub Al Hosani. The UAE indicated support for the USG positions on implementing management reform, establishing a Human Rights Council, and establishing a Peacebuilding Commission. Tahir-Kheli stressed the urgency and benefit of even quiet diplomacy. The UAE also expressed support for the Comprehensive Convention Against International Terrorism (CCIT).

¶2. (U) Summary continued: Ambassador Tahir-Kheli, who was accompanied by Ambassador Sison throughout her stay, did a live interview on Al Arabiya television in Dubai as well as interviews with Arabic and English language local newspapers, met with students at the all-women's Zayed University, and discussed UN reform over lunch with UAE Ambassador-designate to the U.S. Saqr Ghobash and MFA Assistant U/S for Special Affairs Abdul Rahman Al Jarman. Tahir-Kheli's deputy, Jane Cowley, and PolChief attended the discussions on UN reform.

Meeting with Information Minister

¶3. (C) Ambassador Tahir-Kheli met December 5 with UAE Information Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, who headed the UAE delegation to UNGA. She underscored the importance Secretary Rice attaches to UN reform, and outlined the key

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USG priorities before UNGA adopts the two-year UN budget on December 23: management reform and the establishment of a new Human Rights Council. She said that the USG is focused on UN management reform and is seeking immediate action in five key areas: strengthening the audit and investigations function of the Office of Internal Oversight Services; creating an independent Oversight Advisory Committee; establishing an independent Ethics Office; reviewing obsolete mandates; and expanding and extending the UNSYG's authority to redeploy staff and resources. The USG is trying to push for as many of these proposals before the two-week Christmas break, she said. Most UN members want management reforms because they want their contributions to be used effectively and efficiently, she added. Tahir-Kheli acknowledged that the review of mandates was complex, but the USG would try to act on those mandates that are obvious before the 2006-2007 budget is adopted. "It's time to stop talking and time to start implementing," she said.

¶4. (C) The establishment of a Human Rights Council is also "very high priority" for the USG, Ambassador Tahir-Kheli told Sheikh Abdullah. She said a working group has been negotiating all aspects of the new council, including its mandate, working methods, and election procedures. "Let's agree to wrap up this issue. We can get the agreed items implemented," she said. Difficult issues can be tackled after, she added. Tahir-Kheli also briefly mentioned the USG's position on the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission.

¶5. (C) Sheikh Abdullah responded that the UAE viewed the UN as a very important body, and that reforms would relieve pressure on the U.S. and the role the West is playing with respect to terrorism, stabilizing Iraq, and achieving peace between Palestinians and Israelis. Reforms would add more credibility and transparency to the organization, he added.

¶6. (C) Ambassador Tahir-Kheli again underscored the need for urgent action. If the USG does not obtain some "initial results" to show Congress before the UN adopts its two-year budget on December 23, Congress has said it "will take away 50 percent of U.S. funding" for the UN. "That would mean an end to a lot of things," she warned. "We don't want to see that happen." Sheikh Abdullah replied, "It depends on how fast you want to reform the UN."

¶7. (C) Sheikh Abdullah asked what the U.S. position was on the UN's bureaucracy. Ambassador Tahir-Kheli replied that it was important to "retool" the UN staff and "rationalize" their work to respond to the current needs of the organization. Sheikh Abdullah also asked which countries were the largest financial contributors to the UN and what their positions were on reform. Tahir-Kheli said "almost everybody wants reform" regardless of their level of contribution. What are the "clear disagreements" among member states? Sheikh Abdullah inquired. The issue of obsolete mandates, such as the Decolonization Committee and the Trusteeship Council, Tahir-Kheli replied. Any programmatic shift would affect jobs, and require "rationalization" or work for new, more important issues, such as peacekeeping, relief aid, and peacebuilding. There is still a "head in the sand approach" among some UN members on this issue, with some insisting that UNGA is "paramount" and only UNGA has the prerogative to conduct a review of mandates.

¶8. (C) Ambassador Tahir-Kheli shared with Sheikh Abdullah an earlier conversation with Pakistan's President Musharraf, who agreed on the need for reform and was proposing reforms for the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). She said that Musharraf's view was, "If institutions are going to stay relevant, they have to reform themselves." Sheikh Abdullah noted that he would be attending the OIC summit in Mecca December 7-8.

¶9. (C) Ambassador Tahir-Kheli requested that the UAE speak out on these issues. "At the UN, silence does not imply consent," she said. The USG wants other countries to be more

vocal so the issues are not perceived as being U.S. issues alone. "It's a common agenda we want to share," she said. Sheikh Abdullah replied by saying that if the UAE can "do some convincing of others, we will do our very best," but he added that the USG should not expect the UAE to be vocal because "we are not known for being outspoken." Tahir-Kheli thanked Sheikh Abdullah for his support, adding that "quiet diplomacy works fine if it supports the common agenda for reform."

Meeting with Foreign Ministry Officials

¶10. (C) Earlier in the day, Ambassador Tahir-Kheli met at MFA with U/S Abdullah Rashid Al Noaimi and MFA Director for International Organizations Yacub Al Hosani, where she stressed the urgency of achieving some results before the UN budget vote. Al Noaimi replied that the UAEG was in total agreement with the USG that the UN was "overdue" for reform. "Today's world is totally different and the agenda is totally different," he added. Al Noaimi agreed that some issues could be resolved before the budget deadline and that "the devil was in the details." Tahir-Kheli reviewed the need for management reform, and said it was time to eliminate obsolete mandates, such as the Trusteeship Council, which still has a staff, and produces reports in six languages that people don't read. Such reports cost \$2,000 per page, she said, although Al Hosani had heard a figure of \$8,000. The money would be better spent on eradicating malaria, Tahir-Kheli said. "Everyone wants good management, efficiency, and transparency," Al Noaimi said. Tahir-Kheli also said that the \$85 million reform package proposed by SYG Annan could be reduced by jettisoning unneeded programs. She said the UAE could play a positive role on the UN Fifth Committee. Al Hosani noted that the UAEG had supported the USG in the past, only to see the USG withdraw its resolutions. "We are not withdrawing it this time," Tahir-Kheli assured him.

¶11. (C) With regard to the establishment of a Human Rights Council, Ambassador Tahir-Kheli said the work of the last UN Human Rights Commission was "a painful experience" for all parties involved, and that countries such as Zimbabwe, Belarus, Cuba, and Sudan had sought seats on the commission "to protect their bad record rather than to protect human rights." She said the USG is seeking a smaller council membership drawn from the UNGA membership rather than the more limited ECOSOC membership. The Human Rights Council also should have a "threshold to get better, modernizing countries to join." Some countries would like to see the new Human Rights Council provide capacity-building assistance and technical support to them, she added. Al Noaimi agreed that it was a problem when human rights became "politicized." Al Hosani asked who the Human Rights Council would report to. Tahir-Kheli said the council should have the support of the UN Commissioner on Human Rights, and it would be a standing body reporting to the UNGA, not ECOSOC. "The protection of people is going to be the responsibility of all countries," she said. The Emiratis asked to see a copy of the "Options Paper" that lays out the positions of delegations. Al Hosani opined that the membership selection process would be troublesome. Tahir-Kheli agreed that some things would take time, but that it was important to work on the issues that could be resolved.

Terrorism Convention

¶12. (C) In her meetings, Ambassador Tahir-Kheli also discussed the Comprehensive Convention Against International Terrorism (CCIT), and the USG's hope to have that signed by year's end. She said that Secretary Rice wanted the text to make clear that the international community would not tolerate terrorist attacks on innocent civilians. She noted that "some within the OIC, and Egypt in particular, have made adoption of the Convention more difficult." At the MFA meeting, Al Noaimi said the definition of terrorism was an issue, but he was also interested in knowing how a country would deal with an act of terrorism, and what that country's

responsibilities would be. Tahir-Kheli said she would seek Washington's view on the legal aspects of the convention and respond to the UAE's queries. Al Noaimi said the UAE supported SYG Annan on this issue, and it would let Egypt defend its position. Sheikh Abdullah also raised the CCIT issue in his meeting. "If we can all agree that attacking innocent civilians is a crime, at least let's start there," he said. "We all have to work very hard on terrorism, at the UN and elsewhere. ... Terrorists are talking right now in a better way than we are." Everyone agreed that attacks on civilians only harmed the cause of terrorists.

Visit to Zayed University

¶13. (U) During a visit to Zayed University, an all-women's college in Abu Dhabi, Ambassador Tahir-Kheli met with first-through third-year students. Some of the students were clearer than others about their future career and life goals, and almost all appeared confident, outspoken, and engaged. They were convinced of their ability to make a difference and to play important roles in the future. The students asked Ambassadors Tahir-Kheli and Sison about the role of women in the U.S., and inquired about how American women juggle professional and family responsibilities. The students also talked about the influence of their parents and the differences between their parents' and their own generations. One student said she did not appreciate the USG's International Religious Freedom report's analysis of Muslim countries, and asked if the U.S. analyzed its domestic religious freedom issues. Ambassador Tahir-Kheli responded on the important role such a review plays in ensuring the right to religious freedom.

¶14. (U) This message was cleared by Ambassador Tahir-Kheli.
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